

Naturally the conditions at Costa Rica were unfavorable to the study of native ideas concerning apparel. The women and some of the chil-

dren were arrayed chiefly in cast-off habiliments of the rancheras or in nondescript rags, while the men either aped Mexican fashions, like Maahém, or shamefacedly sweated under the unaccustomed burden of tatterdemalion gear; yet there was a meaningful absence of that desire for finery so prominent among primitive peoples—a fact quite as eloquent in itself as the absence of bracelets and bangles, tassels and trappings. It is probable that the shamans and mystery-hedged crones in the depths of Seriland enhance their influence by the aid of symbolic paraphernalia (indeed, some inkling of such customs is found in the meager records of earlier visitors); yet the conspicuous feature of Seri costumery is the dearth of decorative devices.

The habitations of the tribe are the simplest of jacales—mere bowers, affording partial protection from sun and wind, but not designed to shed rain or bar cold. Half a dozen of these were examined at Costa Rica in 1894 and probably a hundred more, in various stages of habitability, in Seriland proper in 1895, yet not the slightest trace of decoration was observed—the structures are plainly and barrenly utilitarian in every feature. The same may be said of the balsas in which the Seri navigate their stormy waters; for the peculiarly graceful curves of the craft evidently stand for nothing more than the mechanical solution of a complex problem in balanced forces, wrought out through the experience of generations, while the simple reed bundles are absolutely devoid of paint, of superfluous cord, of fetishistic appendages or markings, of tritons, nereids, or other votive symbols at bow or stern, and of industrially superfluous features or attachments in general—indeed, the only appendages discovered were one or two simple wooden marlinspikes (shown in figure 26), thrust among the reeds to be at hand in case of need for repairs.

FIG. 13.—Necklace of wooden bands.

Among the utensils employed in the primitive householdry of the Seri the most conspicuous and at the same time the most essential is the olla, or water-jar. Its technical features are described elsewhere; but it may here be noted that the olla is the central artifact about which the very

* Hardy noted the use of "a small leathern bag, painted and otherwise ornamented", as a medicine rattle (*Travels*, p. 262), and also described a wind-symbol and an effigy used for thesamesturgic purposes (*Ibid.*, pp. 284, 285).

462 ing field; though by far the greater part of their time is spent in listless lounging or heedless slumber under the incidental guard of roaming youths and toiling women. The matrons are the real workers in the tribal hive; they are normally alert and active, passing from one simple task to another, gathering stream food along the beach or preparing edibles in the shadow of the jacal, with an eye ever on material possessions and children; they frequently join in hunting excursions of considerable extent; they are the chief manufacturers of apparel, utensils, and tools; and the actions of Castilian caballeros are not infrequently staggered at the sight of half a dozen Seri women "milling" a band of horses, and at intervals leaping on one to kill it with their buxus. The masculine drones are the more petted and courted by reason of their fewness, for during a century or two, at least, the women have far outnumbered their consorts—a disproportion doubtless leading in some respects toward the disintegration of the clan system and, reciprocally, toward the firmer union of the tribe.

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One of the most noteworthy extensions of feminine functions among the Seri is toward shamanism. So far as could be ascertained from Mashém and the associated matrons at Costa Rica, it is such individuals as Juana Maria who convert the arrow "poison", compound both necromantic medicines and curative simples, cast spells on men and things, and even fabricate the stone arrowpoints and counterfeit cartridges; though unhappily the data are neither so full nor so decisive as desirable.

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Conformably with their prominence in proprietary affairs, the Seri matrons seem to exercise formal legislative and judicative functions; for not only do they hold their own councils for the arrangement of the domestic business of the rancherías, but they also participate prominently in the tribal councils (as explained by Mashém), and play important rôles in carrying out the decisions of such councils—as when they cooperate with war parties as decoys, or journey across their bounding desert to spy out the land of the enemy.

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On the whole, it would appear that the clan organization of the Seri conforms closely with that characteristic of savagery elsewhere, especially among the American aborigines. The social unit is the maternal clan, organized in theory and faith in homage of a breast-god, though defined practically by the ocular consanguinity of birth from a common line of mothers; yet the several units are pretty definitely welded into a tribal aggregate by common feelings, identical interests, and conjugal ties. The most distinctive features brought out by the incomplete investigation are the somewhat exceptional manifestation of property-right in the females, the singularly strong sense of maternal relation, and the apparent prominence of females in shamanistic practices as well as in the tribal councils.

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* The agency of the women in applying the arrow "poison" was noted by Hardy, cf. p. 108.

614/Classed with respect to major administration, therefore, the clan may be regarded as an informal *adelpharchy* (*adelphos* and *agros*) or *adelphocracy* (*adelphos* and *arros*). It has none of the elements of the patriarchy, since male lineage is not recognized, and can not be classed as a matriarchy, since the clanmother is administratively subordinate to her brothers; while the avuncular functions are apparently incubate and indirect, i. e., exercised only through or in conjunction with the clanmother. In short, the clan is ordained or regimented in ostensible accordance with physical power, though the real faculty is confused (after the fashion of primitive thinking generally) with mystical faculties, imputed largely on magical grounds but partly on grounds of age-reverence, etc. Now, when two or more clans combine, the basis on which the common chiefship is determined is similar to that determining the clan leadership; at the outset three factors enter, viz, (1) the seniority of the clans in the accepted tribal mythology (2) the prowess of the respective clan leaders (always weighed in conjunction with the shamanistic potency of their conjoints), and (3) the numerical strength of the respective clans; but practically, so far as can be judged from all available information, the choice really reflects physical force, since in case of doubt the strongest and bravest man becomes the chief by virtue of his strength and bravery, while the strongest clan finds fair ground for claiming seniority in the very fact of its strength. Naturally disputes arise in the adjustment of the several relations; and in the actual analysis in council, the dispute is commonly reduced to a contest between gods and men, i. e., between the claims for mystical and magical potencies on the one hand and the claims of brawn and bone on the other hand, so that strength wins, unless omens or prodigies turn the scale—which happens often enough to keep the subjective and the objective elements in fairly equal balance. Sometimes the contents are quickly settled; again they last for months, during which the tribe struggles under its weight of Cerberus heads; and repeatedly the disputes have ended in the annihilation of clans, or even in the tribal fissions attested by the recorded and traditional history of the Serian family.

643/ The chiefship once determined, the leader bends all energies toward maintaining the position by which he is dignified and his clan exalted. He recognizes his responsibility for the welfare of the tribe—not only for success in battle and food-getting, but for stilling storms at sea, protecting the *aguajes* from the drought-demons, and securing all other benefits, both physical and magical; he must be aggressive yet cautious on the warpath, fleet and enduring in retreat, indomitable in the chase, bold but not reckless on the balms, and above all panoplied and favored by the shadowy potencies of air and earth and waters; he must be the local and lowly Admirable Orlinton, and his never-neglected watchword must be *admirable oblige*. His practical devices for maintaining prestige are many and diverse; it is customarily the chief who carries the sym-

wanted people to die so he could eat their bodies; Pinacate because men stepped on him. Then Coyote killed his own son (daughter?), and people began to die. 539

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Fire is from the fly, who made it by rubbing his hands together, as he still does (*vide* R. Thomson).

5.

A man wanted to find the house of "Dios," who was the Sun. He went to ask Moon. Moon sent him on, but he could not find it, and returned. Moon played the musical bow (*kāpēxa'ēt*) to call all the birds, but they could not tell him. He played again and one more came, *CaXapniX ke'ēt*, a little duck, who took the man and showed him the way, in a field, with the house in a corner, and showed him the door. The man went in. Sun had a pretty daughter. The man wanted to marry her, she was willing, but Sun would not allow it. He played (cards!) with the man, for each other's bodies. Sun won. He kept the man in his house. But in the morning when Sun went his rounds, the man escaped with the girl into the brush.

Of these tales, the first, except for the cane concept, is a rationalization, evidently post-Caucasian; the third probably finds its nearest analogues in central California; the fourth and fifth are characteristic of the Yuman tribes and southern California Shoshoneans.

Episodes apparently unknown to the Seri of today are: earth diving; frog eating the excrement of the god who dies; vagina dentata.

Shamanism

A "doctor" or shaman, *kō'tē*, becomes such by going to a "cave" in the mountains. This is solid rock, but he paints a sign or mark on it, it opens, and he enters. The "santo" or spirit inside, *seakotkme'k'e*, "going about in the brush," may or may not help him; if so, he strikes the man and enters his body. Through this the shaman can cure; because of the spirit in him, he can see the cause of the disease in a patient's body, "as if he had spectacles on." The spirit is not visible to others, nor does he talk from the shaman's body. 756

The shaman cures by putting his hands on the sick part; he circles them like a tube, puts his mouth on them, and says *cho, cho, cho*. He does not suck out any object. The informant was startled when told how grasshoppers, etc. were extracted by sucking shamans elsewhere; he volunteered later that the idea frightened him. There is no special treatment for rattlesnake bite. [755]

Most old men have more or less shamanistic power.

A shaman is paid a knife, a bow, four arrows, five pesos, or any such amount for curing. Killing of unsuccessful shamans was denied.

POPULATION ABLE TO WORK
(between 11 and 65 years)

Men, 71 or 69% of the masculine population.

Women, 76 or 70% of the feminine population.

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We can add that, at least as far as the male population is concerned, the figure of 69% with a potential work capacity is equivalent, in general terms, to the percentage of the population economically active, since one of the singular characteristics of the Seri population is the fact that they constitute a community fully occupied: all the men of working age have a place set aside in the fishing activities; this is an advantageous position for increasing economic development of the tribe. With relation to the women the situation is not the same, since the majority of girls of marriageable age carry on very few productive activities; it could be said that economic responsibility begins with matrimony. [226]

If it is true that all the Seri men are fishermen, it is also true that there is the beginning of some specialization of jobs, which are carried on complementing or as an accessory to the principal occupation. Thus we have among the men: 463
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Carpenters, constructors of <i>piraguas</i> (a kind of canoe)	6
Medicine men	14
Farmers	2

And among the women:

Seamstresses	4
Farmers	1
Midwives	22

The relatively high number of medicine men and midwives should not be surprising; Seri popular medicine is very well known and depends principally on magical propitiation and since the magic powers are acquired in a variety of ways, including dreams, and the healing rites are, on the other hand, very simple, it is not strange that medicine men should abound. As for the midwives, it can be said that every woman who has undergone the experience of childbirth feels herself able to help at a birth; nevertheless, it is said that the more experienced women are those best able to take care of those giving birth. 755
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Problems which should be attended to

In addition to the sanitary problem mentioned above, mention should also be made of the problem of agriculture, linked with the necessity for supplying food to an Indian population which since economically it depends principally on fishing, needs to complement its diet with agricultural products to achieve a better one. In close relation [423] 185
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so all the other flies could see and also come to this dead thing."

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A few weeks ago, Antonio Herrera had a very vivid dream. He dreamed that he was hunting in the mountains for deer and came across a cave. (These volcanic mountains are pitted with caves.) He went into the cave and saw all kinds of things dear to the heart of a Seri---plenty of rifles, lots of cartridges, knives, *santa* (unbleached cotton), necklaces, red bandannas, blue overalls, *plata*, or silver, and many other things.

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When he awoke he sought his father Manuel Encinas, who is a medicine man and interpreter of dreams, to explain his dream to him. The price demanded by Manuel was six *tiras*---or 30-30 cartridges, a very high price, according to Seri standard. The explanation was this:

It was true that the cave was there and all the things in it just as seen and described by Antonio, but in order to find it he would have to fast nine days and go without water that length of time also, in the heat of summer. Then the way would appear to reach the cave. So far, Antonio has not attempted the fast.

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I witnessed the operation of making a certain kind of pitch or tar which the Seris use to make the seams in their canoes or boats tight. The women pound up the dried pulp next to the outside skin of a dead *pitahalla* cactus (organ cactus). This is very dry and brown in color and the pieces are pounded up to a dry powder with a wash or shore rock in a dried deer hide. This is placed in a *batello*, or flat basket, and manipulated so that the coarse pieces come to the top and are scraped off and thrown away. The fine powder is then put in a five gallon can and some porpoise or sea-lion oil or horse oil is poured on it and stirred into a thick gummy mass. When thoroughly mixed it is put over the fire, in an olla, to boil and continually stirred for an hour or two until it is the consistency and has the appearance of coal tar. While being worked it is kept heated and applied to seams inside and outside the boat. It hardens just like tar and answers the same purpose.

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Since the corn, which had kept this band of Seris in food, disappeared two days before we came, and they had barely kept going on seeds and a few fish, and they all had decided to leave camp with us in the morning---the women walking and the men and some children in boats---it was necessary to supply them with some food to take them to the hunting grounds of the *cahuaco*, or sea turtles, and land them on the Island. The *cahuaco* would furnish them meat---their favorite and national food, and the shores would supply them with clams, oysters, crabs and other sea food.

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So the whole band was called around our camp and each family was furnished with two cups of corn, two of beans, some green coffee and a cup of cube sugar. For the first time our camp was free of Indians, and we ate and went to bed in peace.

The amenities of civilization were laid aside and forgotten in

SERI BLUE

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ABSTRACT

The blue which the Seri Indians of Sonora, Mexico, use in face painting is not the mineral dumortierite, as previously believed, but is a prepared pigment. This paper is a description of the process in which three elements are combined to produce this pigment.

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McGee and Kroeber reported the mineral dumortierite as the source of the blue pigment used in Seri face painting (McGee 1898: 165-6; Kroeber 1931: 27). Coolidge described two blues, one a mixture of gypsum and a boiled root, the other a blue stone found on Tiburon Island (Coolidge 1939: 200). Xavier mentioned dumortierite and commercial bluing. She also referred to a third blue obtained from a plant on Tiburon (Xavier 1946). Present investigation has shown that as far as the Seri know, the only blues they have ever used are *ika?óil* "to cause to be blue" (commercial bluing) and the highly prized *?antezj kóil* "blue clay" of their own manufacture.¹

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The components and the method of manufacture of *?antezj kóil* are said to have been taught to the women long ago by *?ant i?akimxoj* "they who tell the things about the earth." The actual color transformation is veiled in mystery to the Seri who say that if the process of making the clay is observed by any girl who has not passed the menarche, the blue will not appear. Its appearance is not attributed to shaman power, however.

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?antezj kóil has been in less demand during the last few decades since commercial bluing has been readily available. Nevertheless, *?antezj kóil* is the blue preferred by those women who continue to adorn their faces in the traditional manner.

The three ingredients used in making the blue clay are the root bark of *xkoktz* (*Franseria dumosa*), *iki kóizj* "to grind with" (a mixed clay in which montmorillonitic layers predominate), and *mókni óoxW* "excrement (sap) of *mókni* (*Guaiaacum coulteri*). The Seri say that the *iki kóizj* and the *mókni* are found only on Tiburon Island. The root bark of *tinkl* (*Franseria ambrosioides* Cav.) or of *xneejan siiktoj* (*Stegnospermum halimifolium*) can be used instead of *xkoktz*. *tinkl* gives a distinct aroma to the clay. The plants mentioned are fairly common along the Sonoran coast.*

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*EDITOR'S NOTE: It is interesting to note that none of the ingredients is blue in its unaltered state.